2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 S17 Mataco S17
Toba S112
Choroti SK6

M 304 inflammation in the face the girl has to fast for some days after the operation.

M 304 751 Tattooing has a purely magical significance, as may be inferred from the fact that the Mataco and the Choroti women regard it particularly as a protection against disease. Analyzing the custom, we can distinguish at least three factors in it, all of which are associated with magical ideas: first, the scarification or bleeding itself; second, the matter (soot, ashes) rubbed into the wounds; and third, the patterns and marks incised which remain when the wounds have healed. Bleeding and scarification are common practices of purely magical significance among all Indians of South America, and as far as the Pilcomayo tribes are concerned I shall have occasion to mention this custom again in a later chapter. The very scars left after such operations are regarded as a protection against evil spirits. Further, that tattooing is done by means of ashes or soot is certainly not an accident. The use of ashes for superstitious purposes is of frequent occurrence among the Indians, the general idea being that ashes are a prophylactic against evil spirits. The custom of mixing ashes or soot with saliva is significant from the same point of view, for magical virtues are commonly ascribed to the saliva.

M [789]

M [827]

C 304 751 789 All women among the Choroti are tattooed in the same way, that is, have the same marks and patterns applied to the face, and no full-grown woman lacks this tribal characteristic. Since tattooing is regarded as a permanent protection against evil spirits and sickness, it is natural that a woman lacking it should be shunned by the men, but it is not a means of attraction or a »decoration» in the common sense of the word.

T 304 184 [362] As to the *T o b a s*, tattooing or the custom of making indelible marks on the body or the face was formerly in vogue among all Toba tribes as among all peoples of the Guaycurú-group; but the Bolivian Tobas of the present-day have dropped this custom, contenting themselves with simple body painting. Tattooing among the Tobas seems to have been limited to the female sex, as indeed is the rule among the Chaco tribes. According to d'Orbigny, the Toba girls were tattooed when they attained puberty and became marriageable. Since the custom is no longer practised by the Bolivian Tobas I have not seen how it is done by them. The procedure, however, is the same as among other Chaco tribes, incisions being made in the face and ashes rubbed into the wounds. As appears from the photographs of some Toba women which Dr. Lehmann-Nitsche took in Buenos Aires in 1899 the tattooing practised by the Toba women was exceedingly elaborate and complicated.

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C 783 827 [224] resorted to before going out on a hunting expedition. If the arms fails or trembles in pulling the bow, its weakness is, according to the idea of the Choroti, due to the presence of a *mohsek* in the blood; and they think that the evil demon will leave the body with the blood drawn. The same custom is practised by other tribes of the Pilcomayo. Thus C 171 Nordenskiöld noticed it among the Ashluslay, although he did not understand its real meaning. After a trying fishing or hunting expedition, he says, the Indians may be seen to pierce their arms and legs furiously with hard wooden splinters, so that the blood flows in streams; and in order to get a keener sight to find the nests of the bees they likewise prick themselves above the eyes. In both cases the idea evidently is that the demon which causes the weakness or fatigue will be driven away from the body and perhaps killed with the pointed instrument.

M 304 783 The scars left by the cuts are tended with care and shown with satisfaction, indeed with pride. The Indians showed with apparent satisfaction even those cicatrices which the *palometa* fishes had inflicted on their body with their sharp teeth when they were bathing in the river. It is clear that according to the idea of the Indians not only the bleeding purges the body from impure matter and strengthens the limbs, but that the very scars which remain after the operation possess some mysterious power to keep off evil influences, a power which is much the same as that ascribed to real tattooing marks. This Indian view is especially conspicuous in regard to an operation which the whites sometimes perform upon Indians who have come in contact with European civilization, namely, vaccination. I could myself appreciate the extraordinary importance ascribed to scars when during my stay at Esperanza I vaccinated M 751 783 304 a number of Chaco Indians who were employed as labourers at the sugar factory. The Christians probably have no remedy which the natives understand so well as this one, and they therefore as a rule submitted to the vaccine inoculation without remonstration, in fact, with pleasure. The small indelible marks which remained were regarded with wonder and admiration, and it was perfectly understood that they were a sort of warranty that the terrible disease would not attack the person wearing them.

M 302 189 Of all personal ornaments *body-painting* is the most important. All Chaco tribes practise it, and men and women alike. In the Chaco, as in other parts of South America, body-painting is essentially a custom of magical significance, as one can easily find out by considering the circumstances under which it is practised. The favourite colour of the

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the body of some animal. The magical nature of these ornaments was likewise obvious.

Among the *Mataco*, who in general are more addicted to religion and superstition than the Choroti, the character of facial painting as a magical charm is more conspicuous. These Indians give facial painting different names according as it is used by men or women and depending on its colour. Thus the red painting of women is called *eruhák*, whereas the red painting of the men is called *oráittáh* (a name evidently derived from the word *áittáh* demon). The black painting is called *letáh*. It is especially used as a sign of sorrow. When a Mataco man dies, his widow and daughters blacken their faces with charcoal, regarding this as a protection against the death-demon. Similarly, for some time after a death the younger men every evening perform the dance *Katinák*, and all those taking part in the dance have their faces blackened. — The red painting again is applied as a means of giving the body strength and as a direct protection against evil spirits causing sickness.

Many *personal ornaments* of the Chaco Indians, for instance ear-tubes, necklaces, feather ornaments etc., are of the nature of charms or amulets against evil spirits. The feather ornaments most customary among the Chaco tribes are ostrich plumes, and these, as I have shown in my *Civilization of the South American Indians* have originally not been decorations in the civilized sense of the word, but magical charms, a character which they still preserve for instance among such tribes as the Chamacoco and Lenguas in Paraguay. Among the Choroti, who likewise at their great feasts in December and January wear great ostrich plumes as ornaments, this is not equally conspicuous in accordance with the fact that in many cases the Choroti culture shows traces of an incipient degeneration. On the other hand, in the description I have given before of a Mataco dance performed to conjure disease demons and in which the sorcerers had ostrich feathers fastened to the ankles, wrists, head, and waist,[1]) the »mystic» significance of these »ornaments» is quite obvious. Similarly, when another writer states that the Mataco in some parts of the Argentine Chaco not only use ostrich plumes as head-ornaments, but also apply them to the face as a sort of beard, which gives them a grotesque and ferocious appearance, or wear them round the wrists in the way of bracelets,[2]) one cannot fail to recognize superstitious motives behind these arrangements.

[1]) See *supra*, p. 137.

[2]) Baldrich, *Los comarcas virgenes*, p. 231.

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The *ear-tubes* which are worn as ornaments for instance by the Choroti. Ashluslay and Toba-Pilagá and which consist of wooden plugs or pieces of cane, sometimes of tremendous size, are likewise nothing but magical charms or amulets. This was clearly indicated by the Choroti, who told me that the ear-discs are worn to prevent the evil spirits, the *möhsel*, from penetrating into the ears. Their hugeness and peculiarity is evidently thought to act as a deterrent upon the spirits, and there seems to be the idea that the larger they are the more efficacious.

The Indians of the Pilcomayo use various kinds of *necklaces*, and it seems to be the rule that among the most primitive tribes, such as the Choroti and Ashluslay, they are more worn by men than by women, among the more civilized Tobas again more by women than by men. Speaking of the dress of the Choroti, I mentioned the large and costly kind of necklace consisting of snail's shells elaborately fashioned into small round buttons with a hole drilled in the centre and closely strung together. The necklace, called *lähslehuésle* in the Choroti language, is not only an ornament but at the same time a magical charm. The Choroti no doubt gave me the true explanation of their original significance when they told me that the necklace is a protection against sickness. The evil spirits, according to the idea of these Indians, preferably attach themselves to the throat or the chest, because catarrhs are very common in the Chaco during the dry season. The spirits are believed to enter into the body through the throat or the breast, but this is prevented by the protecting necklace. Hence, when a Choroti Indian sells his necklace or leaves off wearing it, his comrades say that he will most certainly soon fall ill. The same idea I found prevailing among the Mataco-Noctenes of Bolivia, where such ornaments are worn by both sexes. Thus the son of a chief, who was just at the age of puberty, one day appeared painted red in the face with *urucú*, and with a large necklace which covered the neck and the breast. When I asked the father why his son had put on these things, he answered: »It is in order that he may not fall ill«. Both among the Matáco and the Choroti it is customary that children of both sexes go totally naked up to the age of eight to ten years, but nearly always they wear collars and facial paintings which most certainly are not »ornaments« in the civilized sense of the word.

Among the South American Indians in general it is a common custom to tie round a limb, for instance the wrist or the leg, a leather strap or some other kind of band, professedly with a view to making the arm or the leg strong. The Chaco Indians also commonly wear such ligatures

3: Metraux E-5 (1933) 1939 SI7 Mataco SI7

serve to pay the medicine-man in case something happens to them. 753 774

The ceremonial objects whose spirit the disease takes away do not become any weaker, since they may be used directly afterwards.

Even though the disease has been given food, he remains insatiable and wants more. He also wants to take away the things he is offered, that is the reason why the medicine-man is obliged to blow on the objects lest the disease should stick to them. When the disease does not get what he wants, he becomes angry and kills his victim.

The disease, or a bad spirit, introduces into the body of the sick person small sticks, usually objects which will make him feel pain. The medicine-man has to take them away by sucking the aching parts and he blows the patient to get the sicknes out of his body. Before treating a patient a medicine-man adorns himself with feathers in order to look like disease or the demon who caused it. The diseases and the spirits are very fond of these ornaments and enjoy seeing them on those who cure the patient. 753 755

When the malady is not very serious, the patient is treated within his hut for economical reasons. To determine whether or not the patient is to be decorated depends upon the seriousness of his case. The medicine-man and the patient get under the same blanket and the former speaks to the disease. Thus the audience is not too large and the disease is easier to cope with. Sometimes it is satisfied with a quart of alcohol. A sick child is always cured inside the house, except when there is an organized ceremony through which they can profit toward the end. 755

According to the Indians vaccine exerts a powerful action against the disease and he can no longer attack the individuals thus vaccinated. Shots fired at the end of the ceremony puts the disease to flight and prevents him from desiring the gun with which one assistant danced. To keep away sickness it is good to hang the carapace of a *tatu* 751

751 *careta* (big armadillo) or the skin of an alligator in the house. The disease will think that the animals are there and will not go into the house.

a) *The Treatment of Disease*

755 I attended a ceremony for the treatment of disease. The ceremony took place in front of some huts, the space was closed in by awnings and cloth. Inside the enclosure were the patient, the medicine-man and a certain number of individuals who assisted the latter. The patient, an old man, was sitting in the center of the space, his body carefully covered with cloth. The medicine-man stood near him and while murmuring incantations blew on the patient's body through his half clenched hand, beginning with his back, then the shoulders, the face and so on. In the meantime four or five men were dancing without interruption and made all the noise they could with a belt of big bells. They had tied to their feet anklets of deer hoofs and wore around their waists belts of ostrich feathers and on their heads were diadems. One of them held in his hand a bunch of ostrich feathers.

755 535 292

755 535 Their dance consisted of a cadenced and half-jumping walk with slightly bent knees. Some dancers went forward or backward while others stayed in the same spot. During the ceremony the medicine-man received the help of another old man who was also squatting at the patient's side. He began muttering incantations and blowing on the sick man as hard as he could. After one hour of this utterly exhausting exercise, the medicine-man went to a pot full of rice which was carefully concealed by a sheet near the patient. He crouched under the sheet and recited in a supplicative voice a long incantation over the food. Afterwards he blew on the rice with all his strength. He then offered goodly portions of it to all who had taken part in the ceremony. Then the medicine-man went to two *caraguatá* bags full of dresses. He covered them with a cloth under which he crouched. He